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PATENT APPLICATION

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. 10003234-1

IN THE
UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s): Robert E. Haines et al.

Confirmation No.: 2649

Application No.: 09/733,472

Examiner: B. Bruckart

Filing Date: December 8, 2000

Group Art Unit: 2155

Title: CONSUMABLE ORDER-ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR COMPUTER PERIPHERAL DEVICES
WITHIN A CENTRALIZED NETWORK ENVIRONMENT AND METHOD

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TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF

Transmitted herewith is the Appeal Brief in this application with respect to the Notice of Appeal filed on June 29, 2006.

The fee for filing this Appeal Brief is (37 CFR 1.17(c)) \$500.00.

(complete (a) or (b) as applicable)

The proceedings herein are for a patent application and the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) apply.

☐ (a) Applicant petitions for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136 (fees: 37 CFR 1.17(a)-(d)) for the total number of months checked below:

☐ 1st Month
\$120

☐ 2nd Month
\$450

☐ 3rd Month
\$1020

☐ 4th Month
\$1590

☐ The extension fee has already been filed in this application.

☒ (b) Applicant believes that no extension of time is required. However, this conditional petition is being made to provide for the possibility that applicant has inadvertently overlooked the need for a petition and fee for extension of time.

Please charge to Deposit Account 08-2025 the sum of \$ 500. At any time during the pendency of this application, please charge any fees required or credit any over payment to Deposit Account 08-2025 pursuant to 37 CFR 1.25. Additionally please charge any fees to Deposit Account 08-2025 under 37 CFR 1.16 through 1.21 inclusive, and any other sections in Title 37 of the Code of Federal Regulations that may regulate fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

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Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of

Dated: August 29, 2006

ROBERT E. HAINES, MARK A. HARPER,
KENLEY HINRICHS, MARY B. BAUMUNK,
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HP Docket No. 10003234-1

Serial No. : 09/733,472

Examiner B. Bruckart

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Group Art Unit 2155

For : CONSUMABLE ORDER-ASSISTANCE SYSTEM FOR
COMPUTER PERIPHERAL DEVICES WITHIN A
CENTRALIZED NETWORK ENVIRONMENT AND METHOD

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Commissioner for Patents
P. O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Sir:

BRIEF OF APPELLANTS

This Brief is presented in opposition to the Examiner's rejection of claims 1, 3-27 and 30-44 in the final Office action dated May 8, 2006.

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest is Hewlett-Packard Development Company, LP, a limited partnership established under the laws of the State of Texas and having a principal place of business at 20555 S.H. 249 Houston, TX 77070, U.S.A. (hereinafter "HPDC"). HPDC is a Texas limited partnership and is a wholly-owned affiliate of Hewlett-Packard Company, a Delaware Corporation, headquartered in Palo Alto, CA. The general or managing partner of HPDC is HPQ Holdings, LLC.

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II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no known related appeals or interferences.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

The present application was filed on December 8, 2000 with original claims 1-44. A first Office action was mailed April 1, 2004. Appellants cancelled claims 2, 28 and 29, and amended claims 1, 14, 23, 30-33, 37 and 39-41 in their response (dated May 28, 2004). A second Office action was mailed August 4, 2004. Appellants did not amend or cancel the pending claims in their response (dated October 4, 2004). A third Office action was mailed November 12, 2004. Appellants did not amend or cancel the pending claims in their response (dated December 6, 2004). A fourth Office action was mailed January 31, 2005. Appellants amended claims 1, 14, 16, 23 and 37 in their response (dated April 27, 2005). A fifth Office action was mailed August 8, 2005. Appellants amended claim 1 in their response (dated October 5, 2005). A sixth Office action was mailed October 21, 2005. Appellants amended claims 1, 14, 23 and 37 in their response (dated November 8, 2005). A seventh Office action was mailed January 4, 2006. Appellants did not amend or cancel the pending claims in their response (dated April 4, 2006). A final Office action was mailed May 8, 2006.

Pending claims 1, 3-27 and 30-44 are the claims at issue in this appeal.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

No amendments have been made subsequent to the final Office action dated May 8, 2006.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The summary is set forth in exemplary embodiments. Discussions about elements and recitations of claimed subject matter can be found at least at the cited locations in the specifications and drawings.

The claims at issue in this appeal are directed to a consumable component replenishment and maintenance assistance system for a centralized network environment, a consumable order assistance system for a computer peripheral device within a centralized network environment, a computer-implemented system which implements a program in which consumable components of computer peripheral devices in a centralized network system are replenished, and a method for replenishing consumable components of at least one computer peripheral device within a centralized network.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a consumable component replenishment and maintenance assistance system 18 for a centralized network environment 10 (e.g., Fig. 1, page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 7). The system comprises a computer network 16 and a plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' within the network 16 (e.g., Fig. 1; page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 7). The system also comprises a personal computer 12, 12' within the network 16 and having a user interface 27 usable by a maintainer to maintain operation of at least one computer peripheral device 14, 14' of the plurality 14,

14' (e.g., Fig. 1; page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 15). The system additionally comprises a server 48 within the network 16 and having a consumable component consolidation program operative to monitor the plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' to identify at least a need to replenish a consumable component for each of the plurality of the computer peripheral devices 14, 14', and to notify a maintainer of the identified need by rendering instructions that are sent to the maintainer at the personal computer 12, 12' (e.g., Figs. 1-2 and 4; page 8, line 30 to page 9, line 7; page 21, lines 11-30). The consolidation program is operative to deliver to the maintainer an e-mail that consolidates the need to replenish the consumable component for a select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from among the plurality of the computer peripheral devices 14, 14' when two or more computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from the select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' have the need to replenish the consumable component (e.g., Fig. 4; page 22, lines 21-24; page 24, lines 8-16).

Independent claim 14 is directed to a consumable order assistance system 18 for a computer peripheral device 14, 14' within a centralized network environment 10 (e.g., Fig. 1, page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 7). The system comprises a personal computer 12, 12' having a user interface 27 (e.g., Fig. 1, page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 15). The system also comprises a plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14', each computer peripheral device 14, 14' including a consumable. The system additionally comprises a centralized server 48 having a consumable re-order program including instructions to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at the personal computer 12, 12', the instructions including a message that consolidates

the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from among the plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' when two or more computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from the select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' have the need to replenish consumables (e.g., Figs. 1-2 and 4, page 8, line 30 to page 9, line 7; page 15, lines 14-18; page 16, line 26 to page 17, line 21). The system further comprises a computer network 16 interconnecting the personal computer 12, 12', the plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14', and the centralized server 48 (e.g., Fig. 1, page 8, line 30 to page 9, line 7).

Independent claim 23 is directed to a computer-implemented system 18 which implements a program in which consumable components of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' in a centralized network 16 are replenished (e.g., Fig. 1, page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 7). The system comprises a monitoring system 54, 56 which identifies a need to replenish one or more consumable components for any one of a plurality of unique computer peripheral devices 14, 14' within the network system 16 (e.g., Figs. 2 and 4; page 9, lines 8-30; page 24, lines 9-11). The system also comprises a notification system 64 which notifies a user of the identified need to replenish components and/or perform maintenance (e.g., Figs. 2 and 4; page 9, lines 8-30; page 24, lines 14-16). The system additionally comprises a consumable order placement system 62, 66 which generates an order with a supplier of consumables in response to a user authorizing the order (e.g., Figs. 2 and 4; page 9, lines 8-30; page 20, line 16 to page 21, lines 10). The system further comprises a server 48 having a consumable consolidation program for monitoring at least one computer peripheral device 14, 14' to

identify a need to replenish consumables for the at least one computer peripheral device 14, 14' in the network environment 10, and notifying a maintainer of the consolidated, identified need by rendering instructions that are sent to the maintainer at the personal computer 12, 12' by forwarding an e-mail, the e-mail including a hot link to a web site of a consumable reseller, and the instructions including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from among the plurality of unique computer peripheral devices 14, 14' when two or more computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from the select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' have the need to replenish consumables (e.g., Figs. 1-2 and 4; page 8, line 30 to page 9, line 7; page 22, line 21 to page 23, line 5; page 24, lines 8-16).

Independent claim 37 is directed to a method for replenishing consumable components of at least one computer peripheral device 14, 14' within a centralized network 16 (e.g., Fig. 1; page 6, line 30 to page 7, line 7). The method comprises providing a centralized server 48 within the network 16 communicating with the at least one computer peripheral device 14, 14' among a plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' (e.g., Fig. 1; page 8, line 30 to page 9, line 7). The method also comprises identifying a need to replenish a consumable component for each of the at least one computer peripheral components 14, 14' (e.g., Fig. 10; page 25, lines 24-27). The method additionally comprises consolidating the identified need to replenish the consumable component for one or more of the at least one computer peripheral device 14, 14' in the network 16 (e.g., Fig. 10; page 25, lines 28-31). The centralized server 48

includes a consumable re-order program configured to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at a personal computer 12, 12', the notification including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from among the plurality of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' when two or more computer peripheral devices 14, 14' from the select group of computer peripheral devices 14, 14' have the need to replenish consumables (e.g., Figs. 1-2 and 4, page 22, lines 21-24; page 24, lines 8-16).

Specific references to portions of the application are provided with the understanding that nonreferenced portions of the application also may be relevant. As such, it should be understood that the claims are not limited by the particular references made above, but rather are fully supported by the entirety of the disclosure.

VI. GROUND OF REJECTION

In the final Office action, claims 1, 3-27 and 30-44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Fan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,310,692) in view of Sekizawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,430,711), Silva et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0034658) and/or Yanagidaira (U.S. Patent No. 6,490,052).

VII. ARGUMENT

The Examiner has improperly rejected Appellants' claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). When the claims are reviewed under the current standards for obviousness as set by the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals and the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, the impropriety of the rejections becomes clear.

i. Standard of Review

Obviousness is a question of law based on (1) the scope and content of the prior art; (2) the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue; (3) the level of ordinary skill in the art; and (4) objective evidence of nonobviousness. *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 17, 148 USPQ 459, 467 (1966). “In proceedings before the Patent and Trademark Office, the Examiner bears the burden of establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness based upon the prior art.” *In re Fritch*, 972 F.2d 1260, 1265, 23 USPQ2d 1780, 1783 (Fed. Cir. 1992). “If examination at the initial stage does not produce a *prima facie* case of unpatentability, then without more the applicant is entitled to grant of the patent.” *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 1445, 24 USPQ2d 1443, 1444 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

“To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art, and not based on applicant’s disclosure. M.P.E.P. (citing *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

Teachings in a reference indicating that a proposed combination should not be made must be considered when determining whether there is a motivation to make the proposed combination. *In re Young*, 927 F.2d 588, 18 USPQ2d 1089 (Fed. Cir. 1991). For example, the proposed modification can not render the prior art unsatisfactory for its intended purpose. *In re Gordon*, 733 F.2d 900 (Fed. Cir. 1984). Moreover, the proposed modification can not change the principle of operation of a reference. *In re Ratti*, 270 F.2d 810 (CCPA 1959).

The law is “clear that the best defense against the subtle but powerful attraction of a hindsight-based obviousness analysis is rigorous application of the requirement for a showing of the teaching or motivation to combine prior art references.” *In re Dembiczak*, 175 F.3d 994, 999, 50 USPQ2d 1614, 1617 (Fed. Cir. 1999) (citations omitted).

ii. Discussion

Appellants assert that the rejection of claims 1, 3-27 and 30-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Fan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,310,692) in view of Sekizawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,430,711), Silva et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0034658) and/or Yanagidaira (U.S. Patent No. 6,490,052) is improper.

A. THE CITED ART

Fan et al. discloses a printer resource management system that monitors printer resources and delivers warning messages when a printer resource falls below a predetermined threshold. The system includes a graphical user interface window 500 with a text scroll box 505 (Fan et al., Figs. 5 and 9). Additionally, the system includes message windows 590 having messages 595 that inform a user that "a particular printer 250" needs attention (Fan et al., Figs. 6-8 and 10-12; col. 6, lns. 12-16). The system also monitors printer resource levels, and upon determining a deficient printer resource level, generates and transmits a notification of the deficient printer resource level based on a notification profile. Such notification profile may specify delivery of the notification by e-mail. Figs. 5-8 of Fan et al. are reproduced below for convenience of review.

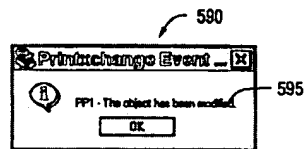


Fig. 6

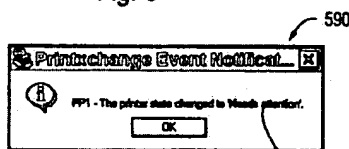


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

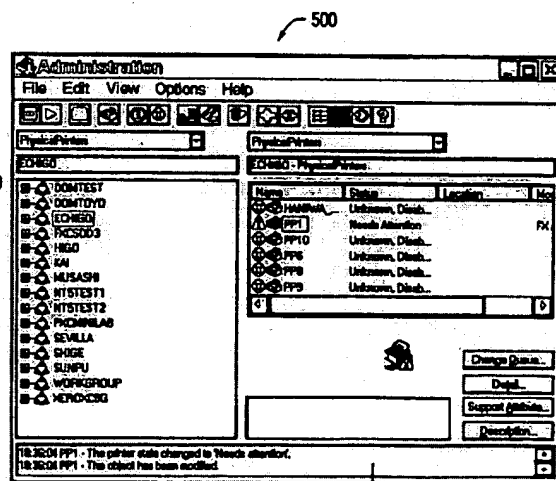
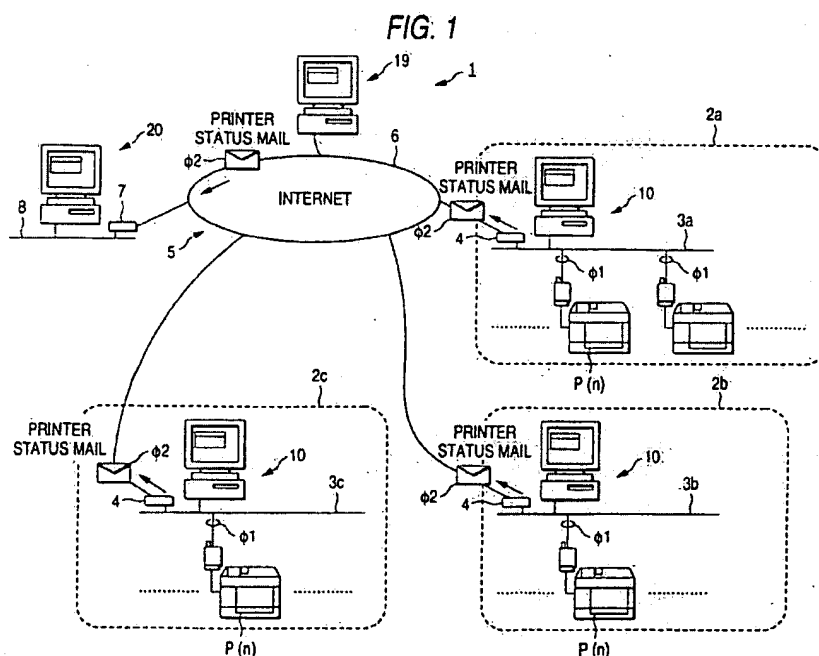


Fig. 5

Sekizawa discloses a system for monitoring the state of printers connected to a network. The system includes local monitoring (agent) units 10, a mail server 19 and an integrated monitoring (console) unit 20. Each of the agent units gets status information from printers $P(n)$ associated with the agent unit and then prepares status mail having that information (Sekizawa, col. 19, lns. 15-35). Each of agent units 10 then sends the status mail to the mail server via the Internet. At the proper time, the console unit reads the status mail stored in the mail server. Fig. 1 of Sekizawa is reproduced below for convenience of review.

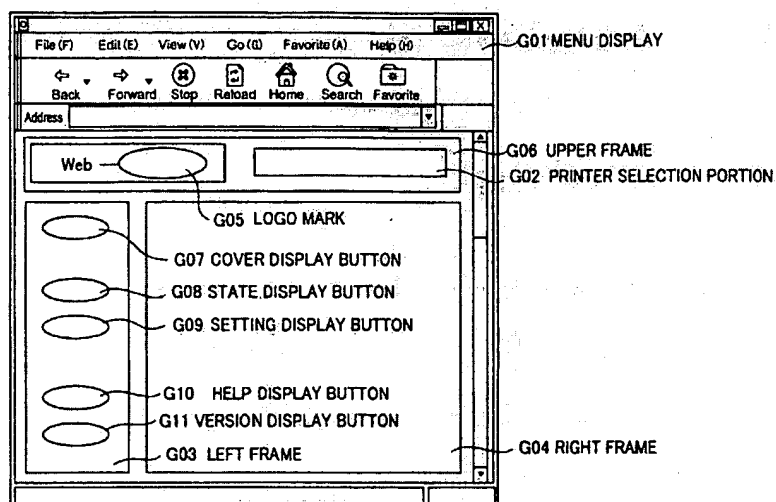


Silva et al. discloses an executable shopping list that enables a user browsing an affiliate Web site's Web page to order a bundle of multiple items offered for sale.

Yanagidaira discloses a printer controller that controls the shared printer of a network to which clients are connected. The printer controller includes a state-monitoring unit that obtains the operating state of a printer (usually paper-empty, paper-

jam or power off). The operating states are displayed on a web browser that operates on a client display window of the printer controller, as depicted below:

Fig.8



B. INDEPENDENT CLAIMS 1, 14 AND 23

Claim 1 recites a consumable component replenishment and maintenance assistance system for a centralized network environment. That claim recites, in part, a consolidation program “operative to deliver to the maintainer an e-mail that consolidates the need to replenish the consumable component for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of the computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish the consumable component.”

Claim 14 recites a consumable order assistance system for a computer peripheral device within a centralized network environment. That claim recites, in part, “a centralized server having a consumable re-order program including instructions to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at the personal

computer, the instructions including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish consumables.”

Claim 23 recites a computer-implemented system which implements a program in which consumable components of computer peripheral devices in a centralized network system are replenished. That claim recites, in part, “a server having a consumable consolidation program for monitoring at least one computer peripheral device to identify a need to replenish consumables for at least one computer peripheral device in the network environment, and notifying a maintainer of the consolidated, identified need by rendering instructions that are sent to the maintainer at the personal computer by forwarding an e-mail, the email including a hot link to a web site of a consumable reseller, and the instructions including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of unique computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish consumables.”

Fan et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a system that delivers an e-mail (or message) consolidating the need to replenish consumable components for a select group of computer peripheral devices, as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23. Instead, the Fan et al. system provides a notification message for a “particular printer” when that printer has a deficient printer resource level. There is no disclosure or

suggestion of consolidating notifications, much less consolidating the need to replenish consumable components of two or more peripheral devices. Thus, Fan et al. fails to disclose, teach or suggest Appellants' system as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23.

Similarly, Sekizawa does not disclose, teach or suggest a system that delivers an e-mail (or message) consolidating the need to replenish consumable components for a select group of computer peripheral devices, as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23. Instead, the Sekizawa system converts printer status information into one piece of electronic mail. There is no disclosure or suggestion of consolidating any needs of the computer peripheral devices, much less consolidating the need to replenish consumable components of two or more peripheral devices. Thus, Sekizawa fails to disclose, teach or suggest Appellants' system as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23.

In the Final Office action dated May 8, 2006, the Examiner stated that Sekizawa teaches "sending an email consolidating the needs to replenish or maintain two or more devices in need" (page 3). However, Sekizawa does not contain that teaching. At best, Sekizawa teaches sending an e-mail consolidating status information of printers associated with the particular agent unit.

Additionally, the Examiner stated that “[a]pplicant seems to agree that Sekizawa teaches a consolidated email of the needs of a plurality of printers” (page 17). Appellants do not agree and have never agreed, directly or indirectly, to such a misreading of Sekizawa. As mentioned, Sekizawa, at best, teaches sending an e-mail consolidating status information of printers associated with the particular agent unit.

Moreover, no suggestion or motivation is disclosed in either Fan et al. or Sekizawa to combine the references. In fact, Fan et al. teaches away from such a combination. As discussed above, the system in Fan et al. provides message windows that notify a user of the needs of a single printer. Modifying the system in Fan et al. to include the consolidation features of the Sekizawa system would be completely inconsistent with the teachings in Fan et al.

Furthermore, even if the improper combination of Fan et al. and Sekizawa is made, that combination does not disclose a system that delivers an e-mail consolidating the need to replenish consumable components for a select group of computer peripheral devices, as recited in the independent claims. Instead, the improper combination of Fan et al. and Sekizawa would provide, at best, a system that consolidates status information from network printers (via status mail) and sends message windows regarding the needs of each printer. Therefore, Sekizawa, either alone or in combination with Fan et al., fails to disclose, teach or suggest Appellants’ system as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23.

Silva et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a system that identifies the need to replenish a consumable component for a plurality of computer peripheral devices, much less a system that delivers a notification consolidating the need to replenish consumable components for a select group of plurality of computer peripheral devices, as recited in the independent claims. Thus, Silva et al. alone, or in combination with Fan et al. and/or Sekizawa, fails to disclose, teach or suggest Appellants' system as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23.

Finally, Yanagidaira does not disclose, teach or suggest a system that delivers a notification consolidating the need to replenish consumable components for a select group of computer peripheral devices, as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23. Instead, the Yanagidaira system provides a web browser to display the operating states of all the shared printers. Thus, Yanagidaira alone, or in combination with Fan et al., Sekizawa and/or Silva et al. fails to disclose, teach or suggest Appellants' system as recited in independent claims 1, 14 and 23.

Therefore, for at least the reasons stated above, the rejection of claims 1, 14 and 23 over Fan et al., Sekizawa, Silva et al. and/or Yanagidaira is improper.

C. CLAIMS 3-13, 15-22, 24-27 AND 30-36

Claims 3-13 depend from claim 1, claims 15-22 depend from claim 14, and claims 24-27 and 30-36 depend from claim 23. Those claims, each of which adds further elements to those recited in claims 1, 14 or 23, are thus allowable for at least the reasons stated above with respect to claims 1, 14 and 23.

D. INDEPENDENT CLAIM 37

Claim 37 recites a method for replenishing consumable components of at least one computer peripheral device within a centralized network. That claim recites, in part, “consolidating the identified need to replenish the consumable components for one or more of the at least one computer peripheral device in the network; wherein the centralized server includes a consumable re-order program configured to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at a personal computer, the notification including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish consumables.”

Fan et al. and Sekizawa, either alone or in combination, do not disclose, teach or suggest a method that delivers an e-mail (or message) consolidating the need to replenish consumable components for a select group of computer peripheral devices, as recited in independent claim 37. Instead, as discussed above, Fan et al. teaches providing a notification message for a particular printer when that printer has a deficient printer resource level, while Sekizawa teaches converting printer status information into one piece of electronic mail.

Thus, for at least the above reasons, the rejection of claim 37 over Fan et al. and Sekizawa is improper.

E. CLAIMS 38-44

Claims 38-44 depend from claim 37. Those claims, each of which adds further elements to those recited in claim 37, are thus allowable for at least the reasons stated above with respect to claim 37.

F. CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons stated above, Appellants assert that the rejection of claims 1, 3-27 and 30-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Fan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,310,692) in view of Sekizawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,430,711), Silva et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0034658) and/or Yanagidaira (U.S. Patent No. 6,490,052) is improper.

VIII. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A consumable component replenishment and maintenance assistance system for a centralized network environment, comprising:

a computer network;

a plurality of computer peripheral devices within the network;

a personal computer within the network and having a user interface usable by a maintainer to maintain operation of at least one computer peripheral device of the plurality; and

a server within the network and having a consumable component consolidation program operative to monitor the plurality of computer peripheral devices to identify at least a need to replenish a consumable component for each of the plurality of the computer peripheral devices, and to notify a maintainer of the identified need by rendering instructions that are sent to the maintainer at the personal computer;

wherein the consolidation program is operative to deliver to the maintainer an e-mail that consolidates the need to replenish the consumable component for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of the computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish the consumable component.

3. The system of claim 1 further comprising another personal computer and an electronic communication link signal coupling the another personal computer with an external seller of a consumable component for one of the at least one peripheral devices.

4. The system of claim 1 further comprising another personal computer, wherein the another personal computer is operative to monitor the at least one computer peripheral device to determine the state of a consumable for each of the at least one computer peripheral devices, and notify a user via the user interface of a need to replenish one or more consumables.

5. The system of claim 1 further comprising another personal computer and another centralized server having a consumable re-order program including instructions to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at the another personal computer.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the consumable component comprises a first consumable component, and further comprising a second consumable component unique from the first consumable component, wherein the consolidation program monitors the at least one computer peripheral device to identify when the second consumable component is near a threshold level requiring replenishment and/or maintenance and the consolidation program consolidates the need to replenish and/or perform maintenance on the first and second consumable components.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein the first consumable component resides on a first peripheral device, and the second consumable component resides on a second peripheral device.

8. The system of claim 6 wherein the first consumable component and the second consumable component reside on a common peripheral device.

9. The system of claim 6 wherein the server is operative to automatically notify a maintainer of the consolidated need to replenish and/or perform maintenance.

10. The system of claim 6 wherein the server is operative to automatically notify a purchaser of the consolidated need to replenish and/or perform maintenance.

11. The system of claim 6 wherein the consolidation program generates a warning message indicating that the second consumable component is near the threshold level.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein the centralized server comprises an integrated web server operative to manage network peripheral devices.

13. The system of claim 1 wherein the consolidation program includes a configurable threshold setting for the consumable component of the peripheral device, wherein a user of the centralized server selectively configures the threshold setting for the consumable component such that the identified need to replenish the consumable component is triggered by the threshold setting.

14. A consumable order assistance system for a computer peripheral device within a centralized network environment, comprising:

a personal computer having a user interface;

a plurality of computer peripheral devices, each computer peripheral device including a consumable;

a centralized server having a consumable re-order program including instructions to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at the personal computer, the instructions including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish consumables; and

a computer network interconnecting the personal computer, the plurality of computer peripheral devices, and the centralized server.

15. The consumable order assistance system of claim 14 further comprising an electronic communication link signal coupling the personal computer with a provider of the consumable for the peripheral device.

16. The consumable order assistance system of claim 14 wherein the centralized server includes a consumable component consolidation program for monitoring at least one of the plurality of computer peripheral devices to identify a need to replenish a consumable component and/or perform maintenance, consolidating the identified need to replenish the consumable component and/or perform maintenance for

one or more of the at least one computer peripheral device in the network environment, and notifying a user of the consolidated, identified need by rendering instructions that are sent to the user at the personal computer.

17. The consumable order assistance system of claim 15 wherein the consumable re-order program automatically initiates an order for consumables in response to identifying a need to replenish a consumable component.

18. The consumable order assistance system of claim 14 wherein the electronic communication link comprises an e-mail system within the network environment, wherein a list of consumables that need replacement are sent to the personal computer via an e-mail message from the centralized server.

19. The consumable order assistance system of claim 18 wherein the e-mail message includes a hot link to a web site of consumable reseller information.

20. The consumable order assistance system of claim 19 wherein the hot link is to a web site that is configured to work with an internal customer order system.

21. The consumable order assistance system of claim 19 wherein the hot link is to a web site that is configured to work with an external web site including a list of providers of the consumable.

22. The consumable order assistance system of claim 18 wherein the e-mail system facilitates consumable ordering by a purchaser at the personal computer.

23. A computer-implemented system which implements a program in which consumable components of computer peripheral devices in a centralized network system are replenished, the system comprising:

a monitoring system which identifies a need to replenish one or more consumable components for any one of a plurality of unique computer peripheral devices within the network system;

a notification system which notifies a user of the identified need to replenish components and/or perform maintenance;

a consumable order placement system which generates an order with a supplier of consumables in response to a user authorizing the order; and

a server having a consumable consolidation program for monitoring at least one computer peripheral device to identify a need to replenish consumables for the at least one computer peripheral device in the network environment, and notifying a maintainer of the consolidated, identified need by rendering instructions that are sent to the maintainer at the personal computer by forwarding an e-mail, the e-mail including a hot link to a web site of a consumable reseller, and the instructions including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of unique computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish consumables.

24. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the monitoring system comprises a server, a peripheral device having one or more consumable components, and a bi-directional communication link, wherein the server polls or sets up the peripheral device to perform an internal check and notifies the server when a need is determined to replenish one or more consumable components and/or perform maintenance.

25. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the notification system comprises a server, at least one client PC, and a communication link provided between the server and the at least one client PC, wherein the server generates and forwards a notification to a user at one of the at least one client PC.

26. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the consumable order placement system is resident on a central server within a network environment having a plurality of PCs.

27. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the consumable order placement system is resident on a PC within a network environment having a central server.

30. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the email comprises a notification that a printer needs replenishment of at least one consumable and/or maintenance.

31. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the email comprises a notification in the form of an itemized list that a plurality of computer peripheral devices each needs replenishment of at least one consumable and/or maintenance.

32. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the consumable consolidation program notifies the maintainer of the consolidated, identified need for a single computer peripheral device by consolidating the need for a plurality of unique consumable components and notifying the maintainer of the consolidated need for the single computer peripheral device.

33. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the server comprises a centralized server communicating with the at least one computer peripheral device and further operative to consolidate the identified need to replenish one or more consumable components and/or perform maintenance for one or more of the computer peripheral devices.

34. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the notification system comprises an embedded web server within a computer peripheral device and a centralized server communicating with the computer peripheral device.

35. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the notification system comprises a Legacy computer peripheral device and a centralized server provided within the network, wherein the centralized server periodically polls the Legacy device to obtain a status of the Legacy device relating to status of a consumable component and/or a need to perform maintenance on the Legacy device.

36. The computer-implemented system of claim 23 wherein the consumable order placement system comprises a centralized server provided within the network and communicating with a provider of consumables via the Internet.

37. A method for replenishing consumable components of at least one computer peripheral device within a centralized network, comprising:

providing a centralized server within the network communicating with the at least one computer peripheral device among a plurality of computer peripheral devices;

identifying a need to replenish a consumable component for each of the at least one computer peripheral components; and

consolidating the identified need to replenish the consumable component for one or more of the at least one computer peripheral device in the network;

wherein the centralized server includes a consumable re-order program configured to send a consumable re-order notification to a consumables purchaser at a personal computer, the notification including a message that consolidates the need to order consumables for a select group of computer peripheral devices from among the plurality of computer peripheral devices when two or more computer peripheral devices from the select group of computer peripheral devices have the need to replenish consumables.

38. The method of claim 37 further comprising notifying a network user of the consolidated, identified need by rendering and forwarding instructions to the network user.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein the network user is a maintainer interacting with the network at the personal computer.

40. The method of claim 38 wherein the network user is an end user interacting with the network at the personal computer having a device status interface.

41. The method of claim 38 wherein the network user is a purchaser of consumables interacting with the network at the personal computer.

42. The method of claim 37 wherein identifying comprises comparing a state of a consumable component with a predefined state, and when the compared identified state corresponds with the predefined state, generating an order request for the consumable for submission to a provider of the consumable via a communication link.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein the communication link comprises the Internet.

44. The method of claim 37 wherein identifying a need comprises receiving a warning notification from a computer peripheral device that the computer peripheral device is down or is about to go down.

IX. EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None.

X. RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None.

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 on August 29, 2006.



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